

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of producing customized information documents, the method comprising:
 - recording a plurality of user preferences;
 - retrieving service provider information that is associated with a service host, a location, or a subject;
 - identifying a portion of the information that relates to the user preferences;
 - creating a custom information document using the identified portion of the service provider information; and
 - outputting the custom information document.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the user preferences are determined from the results of a questionnaire that includes a plurality of questions.
3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the questions are classified by subject.
4. The method of Claim 1, wherein information about the geographical location of service providers and service hosts is retrieved and used to determine location relevance.
5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the service provider information includes a geographic location of a service provider, and wherein the geographic location is used to generate a mark on a map indicating the position of the service provider.
6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the service provider information that is to be retrieved from one or more sets of information is specified by a service provider.
7. The method of Claim 6, wherein the service provider specifies the information set that is to be retrieved based on a time constraint.
8. The method of Claim 6, wherein the service provider specifies the information set that is to be retrieved based on the number of custom information documents that have been created and that include the service provider information.
9. The method of Claim 6, wherein the service provider interactively edits or selects the service provider information that is to be retrieved concurrently with the creating of the custom information document.
10. The method of Claim 1, wherein a template is used to generate the layout of the custom information document.

11. The method of Claim 1, wherein recording user preferences includes formatting a questionnaire-based user interface comprising questions and answers.

12. The method of Claim 11, wherein the questionnaire-based user interface comprises a program that formats and prints questionnaires, wherein a user answers the questionnaires with a pen or pencil, and wherein the questionnaires are scanned and processed by the program to determine user preferences.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein handwritten information on the questionnaire is stored by the program.

14. The method of Claim 11, wherein different questionnaires are printed according to different user profiles.

15. The method of Claim 11, wherein the questionnaire is formatted to produce an Hypertext Markup Language interface and the user answers the questionnaire using a web browser to record user preferences.

16. The method of Claim 11, wherein the questionnaire is formatted by a program to produce an Hypertext Markup Language interface suitable for television display and the user answers the questionnaire using the remote control of the television to record user preferences.

17. The method of Claim 11, wherein the questionnaire is formatted by a program to produce a file that is then used by an audio-text system to prompt the user with voice messages and the questionnaire is answered through the telephone.

18. The method of Claim 11, wherein the questionnaire is formatted to produce a file that is downloaded to a personal display adapter or any other portable computer device which is then used to answer the questionnaire to record user preferences.

19. The method of Claim 1, wherein user preferences are identified based at least in part upon user preference information that is associated with a credit card.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein user preferences are obtained from a database using identification information from the credit card.

21. The method of Claim 20, wherein the database contains an answer list previously completed by the user.

22. The method of Claim 19, wherein user preferences are stored on the credit card.

23. The method of Claim 1, wherein retrieving service provider information includes retrieving service provider information available on the Internet or in general databases to enhance the content of the customized information document.

24. The method of Claim 1, wherein recording user preferences includes retrieving previously recorded user preferences to generate customized content when the user visits other service hosts.

25. The method of Claim 1, wherein identifying a portion of the service provider information includes statistically analyzing the most popular service providers that are selected by users with similar profiles.

26. The method of Claim 1, wherein a service provider receives reports on the number of times the corresponding service provider information has been included in a plurality of custom information documents.

27. The method of Claim 1, wherein a service provider specifies in the custom information document which service provider information is retrievable for inclusion in the custom information document.

28. The method of Claim 1, further comprising retrieving reviews of service providers and service hosts from users who have received an information guide.

29. A method providing formatted service provider information, comprising:

generating a questionnaire with a plurality of questions, with each question having one or more potential answers;

associating at least one reference to service provider information with each potential answer;

receiving answers to the questionnaire;

generating an answer list comprising the associated references to the received answers;

retrieving service provider information for at least one of the references in the answer list;

formatting the service provider information in a layout suitable for printing or viewing; and

outputting the formatted service provider information to an output device.

30. The method of Claim 29, wherein information about the geographical location of service hosts and service providers is retrieved and is used to determine location relevance.

31. The method of Claim 29, wherein the service provider information includes the geographical location of a service provider and therefor the geographic location is used to generate a mark on a map indicating the position of the service on the map.

32. The method of Claim 29, wherein the service provider specifies the information to be retrieved from one or more sets of information.

33. The method of Claim 32, wherein the service provider specifies the information set to be retrieved based on a time constraint.

34. The method of Claim 33, wherein the service provider specifies the information set to be retrieved based on the number of information guides that have been created during a selected time interval and that incorporate the service provider information.

35. The method of Claim 33, wherein the service provider can interactively edit or select the service provider information that is to be retrieved.

36. The method of Claim 29, wherein the user answers the questionnaire with a pen or pencil, and the questionnaire is scanned and processed by a program to determine answers.

37. The method of Claim 29, wherein handwritten information on the questionnaire is stored by the program.

38. The method of Claim 29, wherein different questionnaires are printed for different user profiles.

39. The method of Claim 29, wherein user answers the questionnaire using a web browser to record user answers.

40. The method of Claim 29, wherein the user answers the questionnaire using the remote control of the television to record user preferences.

41. The method of Claim 29, wherein the user answers the questionnaire with voice messages and the questionnaire is answered through the telephone.

42. The method of Claim 29, wherein the questionnaire is formatted by a program to produce a file that is downloaded to a personal display adapter or any other portable computer device and the device is then used to answer the questionnaire to record user preferences.

43. The method of Claim 29, further comprising associating answer list information with a credit card.

44. The method of Claim 43, wherein the answer list is stored in a database and obtained at least in part from the database using the answer list information from the credit card.

45. The method of Claim 44, wherein the database contains an answer list previously completed by the user.

46. The method of Claim 29, wherein the user answer list is stored on a credit card.

47. The method of Claim 29, further comprising retrieving information available on the Internet or in general databases for inclusion in the formatted service provider information.

48. The method of Claim 29, further comprising retrieving previously recorded answer lists to generate the answer list.

49. The method of Claim 29, further comprising retrieving reviews of service providers and service hosts from other users who have received an information guide, wherein the retrieved reviews are used at least in part to generate at least one of the answers.

50. A system to produce customized information documents, comprising:

means for storing service provider information that describes one or more aspects of a service provider;

means for inputting a set of user preferences;

means for associating selecting information content, wherein the information content that is selected is based at least in part upon the input user preferences;

means for storing layout information;

means for formatting the selected information content with the layout information in the form of a guide suitable for printing or viewing in a plurality of media; and

means for outputting the guide to an output device.

51. The method of Claim 50, wherein the user answers the questionnaire by scanning bar codes printed on products.

52. The method of Claim 50, wherein the user answers the questionnaire by scanning bar codes printed in cards designed for such a propose.

53. The method of Claim 50, wherein the guide is a travel guide.

54. The method of Claim 50, wherein the information content relates to travel attractions.

55. A program storage device storing instructions that when executed perform the method comprising:

- recording a plurality of user preferences;
- retrieving service provider information that is associated with a service host, a location, or a subject;
- identifying a portion of the information that relates to the user preferences;
- creating a custom information document using the identified portion of the service provider information; and
- outputting the custom information document.